



Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation

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Safeguarding Policy to Protect Children and Vulnerable Adults

FULL POLICY

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Scope and Purpose of the Policy

Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of students, staff, volunteers, and partners. We have adopted this safeguarding policy in order to protect children and adults at risk from all forms of abuse and harm, enabling them to live with dignity and respect.

Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation unequivocally endorses a culture of zero tolerance toward all forms of abuse and harm, both online and in-person, and seeks that all Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff and partners inflict no harm while carrying out their duties with Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation. Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation will do its utmost to ensure that safe environments are created and maintained for every individual who engages with Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation.

Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff regularly visit partner schools and attend community events. Having an agreed-upon expectation of conduct is an effective way of not only ensuring the safety of children and adults at risk, but also reducing allegations against Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff and partners. We seek to work in ways that reduce any risk to children and adults at risk and minimize the opportunity for harmful behavior to occur in the first place.

This safeguarding policy shall be available in all Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation offices for visitors and staff.

To Whom This Policy Applies

This policy applies to Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff and partners, including:

- All staff, national and international.
- All volunteers and interns.
- All contractors, including but not limited to consultants, photographers, and journalists.
- All board members.
- All supporters, including but not limited to donors, guest visitors, church groups, and ambassadors.

Definition of Safeguarding

According to the International Safety Organisation, in the NGO sector safeguarding means taking all reasonable steps to prevent harm, particularly sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from occurring; to protect people, especially vulnerable adults and children, from that harm; and to respond appropriately when harm does occur.

Safeguarding Categories

It is important to be aware of three safeguarding categories within Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation:

- Category 1: Issues that directly concern an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff member or representative. Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation is required to respond by carrying out an investigation. This category also includes incidents that arise at Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation-organized events, even if staff or representatives are not directly involved.
- Category 2: Issues that concern a staff member of an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation partner. The partner organization has the duty to respond and carry out an investigation. Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation requires the partner's final investigation report when determining continuation of the partnership.
- Category 3: Abuse that happens in a school where Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation or an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation partner is working. Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation or a partner may not have formal responsibility to investigate, but each case should be handled in the best interest of the child or adult at risk.

Additionally, staff should be aware of another safeguarding area:

- Community incidents: Safeguarding incidents that occur at non-partner schools and in surrounding communities. Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation does not have direct responsibility or control, but staff who are aware can challenge unsafe situations and support positive change.

Reporting and Responding

Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation partners with schools and is invited by schools to be on campus. In maintaining protection of children and adults at risk, staff are required to report abuse, suspected abuse, or neglect. A staff member or partner may suspect abuse by noting signs, being told of abuse, or witnessing conduct that is of concern.

Do not hesitate to report abuse. Report immediately and no later than 24 hours after becoming aware of the allegation or incident of concern. Reporting what you have seen or heard may help someone stay safe.

If warning signs are noted, first ensure the victim is safe and has access to necessary care. Immediately inform your Country Director, who in turn informs the Regional VP, and a Plan of Action is developed. If the Country Director is suspected, immediately inform the Regional VP.

You should have reasonable suspicion, but you do not need to prove abuse or be certain it occurred. If you observe contact between a child or adult at risk and an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff member, volunteer, or contractor in a context where they should not be interacting, or if you have concerns those relations are unhealthy, report immediately and within 24 hours.

Document what you have seen. The Suspected Abuse/Neglect Reporting Form (Appendix C) may be used to document abuse, suspected abuse, inappropriate behavior, or non-abuse policy violations. Submit this report to the Country Director as soon as possible, with a maximum of 24 hours.

All persons involved in reporting or documenting alleged incidents of abuse should hold this information in confidence.

If a confidential disclosure is made by an individual (who is not a child) about an allegation of abuse or sexual harassment, and there is no immediate risk of serious harm, a report should only be made with that individual's consent. In such cases, guidance may be sought from the Country Director or Regional VP without disclosing names or identifying information.

Checklist for Reporting and Responding to Abuse

If you see a safeguarding concern, or someone reports an incident to you, please do the following:

- Intervene if the child or adult at risk is in immediate danger, ideally bringing another adult with you. If intervention puts you in danger, immediately contact a police officer or other authority.
- Immediately arrange for appropriate care if injury is involved (ambulance, first aid, medical support).
- Note key information on Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation's Reporting Form (Appendix C) once the child or adult at risk is no longer in immediate danger.
- Give the form to the appropriate Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation leader (for example Country Director or Safeguarding Officer) immediately, or as soon as possible.

Procedures for Partner Schools to Report Allegations Against Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation Staff and Their Guests

When Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation engages in a new school partnership, it should be made explicit to the school proprietor or director that Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff and their guests will follow all school policies relating to outside visitors.

Country Directors will communicate to the proprietor or director that if they suspect an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff member or guest of inappropriate behavior, they should immediately inform the Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation Country Director.

Safeguarding Committee

A Safeguarding Committee will review all safeguarding incidents quarterly. A Safeguarding Incident Log will be kept and reviewed quarterly by the Committee.

The Committee will pass key incidents to the CEO, COO, and VP of People for review and input. Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation is committed to following government requirements for reporting incidents to regulatory and government bodies.

If there is evidence that criminal activity may be involved, the incident will be reported to relevant child protection and or police authorities in the country where the incident occurred, along with the country of origin of the accused as appropriate. This will be done where it is in the best interest of the child or adult at risk.

Expectations of Partner Organizations

All Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation partner schools, alliances, agencies, and other partner organizations that work with Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation are expected to consistently implement strong safeguarding practices in all activity areas involving children and adults at risk.

Safeguarding and Media

The safety and dignity of children and adults at risk will be upheld at all times through Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation media and communications content. Personal information and details of children or adults at risk will not be used if it increases potential for harm or injury to them or their families.

Code of Conduct

Those who accept responsibility for working with children and adults at risk at Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation partner schools and related activities agree to the following:

- Treat children and adults at risk with respect and dignity.
- Comply with Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation's Safeguarding Policy.
- Never physically, sexually, verbally, or emotionally harm or neglect any child or adult at risk served by Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation.
- Do your best in all situations to prevent any child or adult at risk from experiencing physical, verbal, sexual, or emotional harm.
- Follow the two-adult rule so as not to be alone with a child.
- Never provide personal contact details (email, mobile number, postal address) to a child or young person, and never contact them through personal social media accounts.
- Immediately report concerns about a child's welfare, within 24 hours.

Guidelines on Personal Conduct

Common expressions of affection (for example hugs), affirmation (for example pats on the back, high fives), and blessings (for example laying on of hands), when done without sexual connotations, may be appropriate in this community of caring Christians.

Expressions of affection shall not be excessive or imposed upon others. No child or adult should be made to feel guilty if they do not wish to participate in these expressions of affection. Children and adults will be made aware that participation is optional.

Adults shall not touch or interact with children in any way intended to be sexually stimulating. Any activity of this type is illegal and a violation of trust.

Adults shall not engage in inappropriate behavior with children. Examples include but are not limited to seeking private time with children, taking children on outings or overnight trips without other adults, swearing in front of children, sharing sexually suggestive or explicit content with children, or making suggestive comments to children.

Corporal punishment or verbal abuse is never permitted.

Guidelines for Visiting Schools

- When possible, inform the school in advance of your visit.
- Wear Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation attire and or a name tag identifying you as an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation employee.
- Sign in at the school's main office upon arrival and inform staff of your purpose and who you will meet.
- If interacting with children, ensure another adult is present at all times.
- Use designated staff restrooms only and do not enter student restrooms.
- Before taking photos or videos of children, request permission from the school. If photos or videos are for public use, formal written permission is required and should include intended use.
- If you believe there is evidence of abuse, school administration should be informed by the Country Director. Where schools have child protection policies, staff should follow those reporting processes.
- If an Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation staff member believes school administration is abusing children, the Country Director should be informed immediately and within 24 hours.

Power and Positions of Trust

A relationship between an adult and a child or adult at risk is not a relationship between equals. There is potential for exploitation and harm of vulnerable people. Adults have a responsibility to ensure unequal power is not used for personal advantage or gratification.

Adults should maintain appropriate professional boundaries and avoid behavior that might be misinterpreted by others. They should report and record any incident with this potential.

Safeguarding Procedures

Screening and Background Checks

All Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation country offices will have a screening and background check process for all new employees. Where possible, employees should undergo a criminal background check before employment. Updated checks will be completed periodically, usually every five years.

Commitment to Policy

All new staff are required to sign the Safeguarding Policy Acceptance Statement (Appendix D), indicating acceptance of and willingness to live in alignment with this policy.

Training

All Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation employees will participate in annual safeguarding training provided by Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation. Responsibility for ensuring this policy is included in new staff orientation rests with each Country Director.

Appendix A: Signs and Types of Abuse

Signs of Child Abuse

One step in helping abused or neglected children and adults at risk is recognizing warning signs. Report suspected physical abuse, medical neglect, mental abuse, or sexual abuse inflicted on a child by caretakers. No single symptom alone proves abuse, but when signs appear often or in combination, concerns must be reported.

It may be physical abuse when you see a child with:

- Questionable burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, welts, or black eyes.
- Fading bruises or marks after an absence from school.

It may be physical abuse when a school staff member, parent, or caregiver:

- Offers an unconvincing explanation for injury.
- Describes the child as bad or stupid.
- Uses harsh physical discipline.

It may be physical neglect when a child:

- Steals food or money from classmates and often seems hungry.
- Lacks medical or dental care.
- Often appears dirty or tired.

It may be physical neglect when a school staff member, parent, or caregiver:

- Abuses alcohol or drugs.
- Appears indifferent to a child's needs.
- Seems apathetic or depressed.
- Consistently fails to keep important appointments or provide medicines.

It may be emotional abuse or neglect when the child:

- Displays self-destructive behavior such as cutting or burning.
- Becomes overly compliant and passive or extremely demanding and aggressive.
- Acts inappropriately adult-like or inappropriately infantile.
- Cannot make or keep friends.

It may be emotional abuse or neglect when the school staff member or caregiver:

- Constantly puts down or blames the child.
- Rejects the child outright.
- Makes unreasonable demands without regard to developmental level.
- Gets defensive or refuses to consider help for the child's school problems.

It may be sexual abuse when the child:

- Cannot walk or sit easily.
- Displays unusual sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Withdraws, appears depressed, or cannot get along with peers.
- Abuses drugs or alcohol.
- Has unexplained money or gifts.
- Expresses thoughts of suicide and low self-worth.

Relationships in Which Abuse May Occur

- Between an adult (abuser) and a vulnerable adult.
- Between an adult (abuser) and a child.
- Between a child (abuser) and another child.
- Between a child (abuser) and a vulnerable adult.

Types of Abuse

- Physical abuse: forms of physical harm such as hitting, throwing, shaking, burning or scalding, poisoning, suffocating, drowning, or otherwise causing physical harm, including fabricated or induced illness.
- Emotional abuse: persistent emotional mistreatment causing severe and ongoing adverse effects on emotional development, including humiliation, fear, exploitation, or corruption.
- Sexual abuse: enticing or forcing a child or adult at risk to engage in sexual activities, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts and exploitative content.

- Neglect: ongoing failure to meet basic physical or psychological needs including food, clothing, shelter, supervision, medical treatment, and emotional responsiveness.
- Child sexual exploitation: sexual abuse where a child or adult at risk is exploited for power, money, or status, often by someone known to them.

Appendix B: Reporting Process and Flow

Trigger event:

- A child or adult at risk discloses concerning information, or
- You witness concerning behavior, or
- You receive a complaint or rumor involving an adult's behavior toward a child or adult at risk that may be abuse or poor practice.

Immediate response:

- Stay calm, reassure, make no promises, ask a few clarifying questions, and follow this policy.
- Determine whether urgent medical attention is needed.
- If urgent care is needed, contact emergency services and inform them of potential safeguarding concerns.

Escalation timelines:

- Report to Country Director and Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation Regional Human Resource Director at the earliest opportunity and at the latest within 12 hours.
- If Country Director is unavailable, report to the Regional VP.
- If the allegation involves the child's parent, guardian, or caregiver, the Country Director or Safeguarding Officer informs caregivers at the earliest appropriate opportunity.
- Country Director and Safeguarding Officer inform Regional VP and COO or CEO within 24 hours.
- Country Director or Safeguarding Officer calls a Safeguarding Committee meeting within 48 hours to agree an action plan.

Documentation and follow-up:

- The person receiving and reporting the incident must record a written statement, preferably using Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation's incident report form.
- Submit documentation to the Safeguarding Committee at the earliest opportunity.
- The Safeguarding Committee lead keeps the CEO updated. The CEO keeps the Board informed of status and progress.

Appendix C: Suspected Abuse/Neglect Reporting Form

Use this form structure when documenting incidents:

- Your Name:
- Age:
- Your role:
- Date and time of receiving the information:
- Date and time of concern or incident:
- Name of those involved:
- Name of witness:
- Concern type: Observed / Suspected (seen signs of possible abuse) / Disclosed by someone else
- Description of what occurred:
- Signed and Date:

Appendix D: Safeguarding Policy Acceptance Statement

Please read Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation's Safeguarding Policy provided to you. Sign below to indicate that you have read and understood the policy and agree to comply with its procedures when working with children and adults at risk.

I, _____, accept the responsibility to nurture the Christian faith and wellbeing of children in Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation partner schools and to care for them as Christ cares for me.

"Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5)

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6)

I have read and understood Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation's Safeguarding Policy and accept it. I promise to exhibit appropriate behavior and conduct when interacting with children and adults at risk.

I affirm that I have not resigned from or been terminated from a position for reasons relating to abuse or misconduct, as defined in this policy.

I affirm that I will not use my position of trust at Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation to abuse or harm any child or adult at risk.

I HAVE READ and UNDERSTAND and AGREE TO ABIDE BY the Safeguarding Policy of Ozeki Reading Bridge Foundation.

Signature:

Date:

References

[1] International Safety Organisation safeguarding definition.

[2] Broad list of abuse types adapted from Global Schools Forum:

https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.globalschoolsforum.org/resource/resmgr/gsf_child_protection_policy_.pdf

